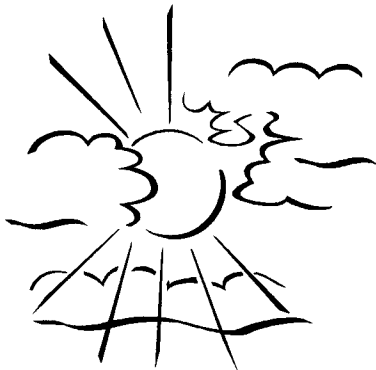


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# **Articles in Today's Clips**

## **Tuesday, November 29, 2005**

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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# State lawmakers to begin debate on reform of welfare programs

***PUBLISHED: November 28, 2005***

***The Associated Press***

***The Macomb Daily***

LANSING -- Lawmakers will begin making decisions on the future of the state's welfare program this week when they return from a 2-week recess.

A group of legislators that had been reviewing the current law recently finished its work. Lawmakers need to address provisions of the law that expire at the end of the year, including sections that spell out which groups can be exempt from work requirements and lay out sanctions for those who aren't complying with work requirements.

But one of the group's leaders, state Rep. Jerry Kooiman, wants more sweeping changes. Kooiman is among a number of House Republicans who want stiffer penalties for people who do not show up for work or job training and limits on the length of assistance that can be awarded. He said able-bodied adults should be limited to four years of welfare and recipients who don't comply with requirements three times should be prohibited from ever again receiving aid. But he does not have agreement from the Senate and Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm on those proposals. With only a few weeks of legislative session left before the end of the year, it's unclear whether lawmakers will be able to significantly revamp the complex welfare law or will have to address just the parts that expire.

Kooiman said he is trying to be optimistic.

"We have some hurdles to cross," he said. "I think there's the opportunity for negotiating some of this. The big thing that's going to be demagogued is lifetime limits" for assistance.

The House could vote on legislation to make changes to the welfare program this week. Although there are a number of disagreements on the future of the welfare program, Kooiman said there's agreement that recipients need more individual attention to help set goals and figure out how to get the skills needed for jobs that pay more than minimum wage.

"We're headed down the same path to develop an effective and efficient system," said Jim Nye, deputy director in charge of field services for the state Department of Human Services. DHS already is looking to step up its efforts to get welfare recipients into long-term jobs with a pilot program it will launch later this year in several counties. But results won't be known for more than a year, Kooiman said.

Kooiman, who is serving his final 2-year term, said he does not want to wait until the pilot project is over to enact changes in the welfare law.

"I'm term-limited, I don't have 18 months and I want to be a part of putting together welfare reform for the 21st century," he said. "But I don't want to rush it from a standpoint of making mistakes. I want to do it right."

Paul Long, vice president of public policy for the Michigan Catholic Conference, said he is worried about making sweeping changes to the welfare program in a short period. Reforms made in the 1990s under former Gov. John Engler took months, he said.

"If something's wrong, we'll just have to come back later and straighten it out," he said.

Those would include circumstances such as a recipient caring for a parent with cancer and those with disabilities, as well as assurances that persons could still get job training.

The House Family and Children Services Committee had yet to set its schedule on Monday, but Rep. Tom Pearce (R-Rockford), a member of the committee and workgroup, said the groundwork has been laid out for negotiations on the issue.

Speaking on the House proposal, Mr. Pearce said it tackles some of the welfare portions that are set to expire at the end of the year, but he would not characterize it as a complete overhaul of the system.

He said that Republicans had wanted to get all caseworkers involved with a particular client together to conduct the assessment, but logistically that could not work every time. The House proposal would ensure that all parties involved on a case are on the same page and that they have all signed off the initial assessment, Mr. Pearce said.

Michigan Report

November 28, 2005

## **LAWMAKERS TO TACKLE WELFARE REFORM**

Besides dealing with the business tax cut issue, lawmakers will return from their two-week recess to address reforms to the welfare system on Tuesday.

Three proposals, one from each legislative chamber and one from the executive office, have come to fruition after recommendations came from a workgroup looking into the issue. Members of the workgroup talked with Department of Human Services employees, Work First staff and residents who participate in the available programs.

The Senate Families and Human Services Committee has scheduled a hearing this week to address its chamber's bills dealing with welfare reform; SB 892, SB 893 and SB 894. Two of the bills deal with participation requirements for the Work First program relating to financial assistance, employment and training.

Committee chair Sen. Bill Hardiman (R-Kentwood) said all the reform bills have similarities, especially putting a focus on early-on assessments, but there is still a question between leaders as to how tough sanctions should be and what time limit should be imposed on those in the system.

Officials are holding onto hope that their differences will be addressed before the Legislature recesses again for Christmas.

"There is open dialogue," Mr. Hardiman said. "There will be more changes as we move through the process."

The Governor Jennifer Granholm on Monday said the administration knows it has work to do to deal with welfare policies before the expiration of current provisions implementing national reform laws which gave states block grants of funds, required recipients to get job training and hold down jobs on at least a part-time basis, and set five-year lifetime limits on making federal funds available for cash assistance.

Michigan did not set a time limit for welfare assistance, using its resources when federal funds expired, but Ms. Granholm said she is not totally opposed to a provision in one pending bill that sets a four-year lifetime limit.

"I don't think that for those who are able bodied that 48 months is too short," she said. "But there have to be some exceptions."

Those would include circumstances such as a recipient caring for a parent with cancer and those with disabilities, as well as assurances that persons could still get job training.

The House Family and Children Services Committee had yet to set its schedule on Monday, but Rep. Tom Pearce (R-Rockford), a member of the committee and workgroup, said the groundwork has been laid out for negotiations on the issue.

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Ann Arbor News

Letters

November 28, 2005

## **Help Americans before aiding foreign nations**

A recent front page held an account of how Medicaid and food stamps will be reduced to help in the budget deficit. More sacrifices to be made on the home front.

Why are we tightening our belts here at home to save money and still sending monies all over the world to people who may or may not receive benefits from them? I see stories of hospitals and schools in the Middle East being demolished as soon as we leave because they would rather have their children sick and uneducated than to be obligated to the United States. Charity begins at home. Why weaken ourselves for unappreciated benefits to foreigners? Benefits, by the way, which are funded with money we have borrowed to give away.

We must increase help to our own people before we send any money to foreign lands. Cuts in spending must be taken from foreign aid and other programs which foster this administration's quest for world domination.

George J. Valenta, Ann Arbor

Macomb County

## **NEIGHBORS USE ADOPTION OPTION: Sterling Heights teen: God 'had a plan for our lives'**

November 29, 2005

BY JACK KRESNAK  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Through all of it -- the beatings of the older sons by their father and then his murder, the frequent police runs to their Sterling Heights house, their mother's mental breakdown -- the four youngest Hannosh children always felt that somehow they were going to make it.

"Our souls were protected by God. He had a plan for our lives," the eldest daughter, 17-year-old Marlene, said Sunday.

"And his plan was for us to live and to meet the parents we have now," she said.

After a celebratory hearing in Macomb County Family Court last week, the four Hannosh kids -- Marlene, Monica, 15, Mark, 14, and Patty, 11 -- were granted their most fervent wish: to be adopted by the family they've come to know and love. They just happen to live across the street. Paul and Karen Fritts were quietly raising their two sons in a comfortable four-bedroom home on Meadowview in Sterling Heights in 1996 when the Hannosh family -- a widow and her seven children -- moved into a red brick house across the street.

The children's father, Isam (Sam) Hannosh, had been shot to death the year before during an argument at a Detroit gas station. His wife, Ferial Hannosh, moved to Sterling Heights, trying to get her three oldest sons away from their drug-dealing friends in their Detroit neighborhood.

The Hannosh children were friendly and open, "but they seemed to need a lot of direction," said Karen Fritts. "We just formed a bond, like a mother-child bond. It was like, they're my kids."

### **A troubling start**

Paul Fritts first noticed the new family on the block when he was repairing his roof and saw the oldest boy chasing down his brother and pummeling him in the Frittses' front yard.

"Hey!" Fritts said he shouted. "I don't know anything about you, but you're not going to hit that little kid!"

That particular pummeling stopped, but not the trouble.

The older Hannosh boys, according to court records, began skipping school, using and selling illegal drugs and generally ignoring their mother.

Police frequently were called to the home, usually during late-night fighting among the three brothers.

"It was a party every night, just crazy," Paul Fritts said.

Looking for respite from the chaos at home, Marlene and the younger kids gravitated toward Paul and Karen Fritts' sprawling four-bedroom home across the street.

Mark became friends -- and a fierce video game competitor -- with the Frittses' sons: Bradley, now 17, and Marshall, now 15.

The Frittses treated the Hannosh children like family. They also helped Ferial Hannosh with money, home repairs and food.

### **Temporary rescues**

Ferial Hannosh was alone and unable to control the boys, who had no adult male role models to keep them in line. She was hospitalized for mental problems many times over the next several years.

The younger kids were twice placed in the Macomb County Youth Home's emergency shelter and spent several months in a foster home.

In 1998, the Department of Human Services was about to remove the Hannosh children a third time when Karen Fritts walked across the street and volunteered to take them in. She was worried that the family would be split up and the kids would have to start over at different schools.

The Hannosh kids pleaded with their social workers to let them live with the Fritts family. Since no relatives offered to take in all four kids, the state agreed.

Bradly gladly gave up his room and suddenly the Frittses' home, which has just one bathroom, was a whole lot busier.

Over the next six years, the children were repeatedly removed from their mother's home and placed with the Frittses. Each stay was temporary.

Marlene said that she, her two sisters and brother were discouraged. She remembers thinking: "How are we ever going to grow up? How are we ever going to have a better life?"

"We just took it day by day."

#### **One hard decision**

Paul and Karen Fritts became licensed foster parents in 2004 so the Hannosh children could stay longer.

Ferial Hannosh, a Catholic immigrant from Syria living on disability checks, decided to sign away her parental rights to her four youngest children in October 2004.

Her oldest son is in prison, but the two other sons still live with her.

"It's hard, you know," she said Monday. "It's sad to give them away, my kids. Sometimes I get sad about it, but I can't do nothing."

It took more than a year to finish the paperwork, but last week -- on Michigan's Adoption Day -- Paul and Karen Fritts officially adopted the four kids from across the street.

"It started out just as neighbor kids coming over," said Paul Fritts, who runs his own roof tear-away company.

"But then they became available for adoption. We couldn't just leave them in the lurch with nobody."

#### **To help needy kids**

- The Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange works to find good homes for foster children who have not been adopted because they are in a sibling group or have other concerns. Go to <http://www.mare.org> or call MARE at 866-312-8361 for more information. Some people who cannot adopt a child could still act as mentors to foster children who are growing older and are not likely to be adopted. The Children's Community Support Network can link qualified mentors with needy foster children. Call anytime at 517-373-5322.

Contact **JACK KRESNAK** at 313-223-4544 or [jkresnak@freepress.com](mailto:jkresnak@freepress.com).



# National Adoption Day Marked in Paw Paw

By: Paul Garrod

11/28/2005

PAW PAW - A Hartford area family had a special reason to celebrate Thanksgiving this year, following the adoption of four children during a Tuesday morning adoption hearing in the Van Buren County Probate Court.

The adoption hearing, held before Probate Judge Frank Willis, marked Michigan Adoption Day, now in its third year.

It was 6-1/2 years ago that Patricia, now 11, Stephanie, 10, Jeffrey, 8, and Angel, 7, came into the lives and home of Kenny and Gayla Bess. Living with the couple on weekends, the four had earlier spent time in two other foster homes.

For the past 2-1/2 years, the four children have been a permanent fixture in the Bess household.

And this day sealed that fixture.

Not only has the relationship grown between the children and the adopting parents, who also have two other adopted children, and one in guardianship, but also the children's birth mother and the adopting parents.

"It's a good relationship with the birth mother and the adoptive family. Very rarely does that happen," said Judge Willis.

"It gives the kids the stability."

The court terminated the rights of the children's birth father, and the mother soon after, gave up her rights.

During the hearing, Julie Beckett, a Van Buren County Department of Human Services employee, told Judge Willis, "The love there (in the Bess household) is evident."

Jeffrey was eager to get the formal process over, telling Judge Willis, "I want to be a Bess and I want to have a dad," which brought a round of laughter from the small group gathered in the courtroom.

Judge Willis then asked Jeffrey, "How about a mom? Is that okay, too?"

Gayla, tried to hold back emotions, saying, "This adoption is a real happy thing for us. And it's something we all knew was going to happen for a long time."

She added, "I think they know that their mother will be a part of their lives. It's a really good thing for these kids. It says a lot that they can love their mother and love us, and be able to separate it."

Bess, a case manager for Van Buren County Mental Health, continued, "They're just really neat children and we love them a whole lot."

Kenny Bess, employed by Krenek's RV Sales, of Coloma, said, "It's been a long time coming, watching them grow to this point. It's going to be fun to watch them grow more, and see how they turn out."

Judge Willis held four files, each one filled with papers about one of the children. He then asked each one to come up separately and take part in the ceremony.

As each one made his or her way to his bench to look at the order of adoption papers, Judge Willis asked each to help seal the adoption orders by hitting the gavel on his stand, saying, "I'm adopted."

Jeffrey then banged the gavel down, and Judge Willis said, "You're a Bess. Congratulations," as the two exchanged "high fives."

Angel, the youngest, made her way up to Judge Willis, who said, "We haven't forgotten about you, as he lifted her up to sit on the judge's stand.

Judge Willis concluded, "It took six years for the Bess children to be yours. God must have had a plan because you opened your homes to them and kept your hearts in the right places."

As the adoption hearing concluded, Judge Willis presented the family with a framed resolution of Michigan Adoption Day from the Michigan Supreme Court.

Soon after, the new family headed out the doors of the courthouse to their vehicle, where they will travel to Pensacola, Fla., and spend Thanksgiving with Gayla's relatives.

Michigan Adoption Day is sponsored by the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Michigan Supreme Court.

Over 30 counties across the state were expected to participate, with some holding informational open houses with speakers and information about the adoption process.

While DHS and state courts strive to reunite children with their birth parents, doing so is not always in the child's best interest.

Courts may terminate parental rights in cases of child abuse and neglect.

There are more than 4,000 children with parental rights terminated who are either waiting for their adoption to be finalized or waiting for a family.

Most children who are waiting for a family are older, members of minorities, or sibling groups - the hardest to place.

Anyone interested in adopting a child may contact 1(800) 589-6273 or on the Internet at [www.mare.org](http://www.mare.org).

Op-Ed Contributor

# Your Mother Would Know

By CAROL BARBIERI  
The New York Times

Published: November 29, 2005

Atlantic Highlands, N.J.

IT'S been 14 years, but I can still feel the terror that gripped me when our son's cardiologist asked my husband and me if Wolff-Parkinson-White Syndrome ran in our family.

Getting my husband's family medical history was as simple as calling his mother. But I'm adopted: I didn't know who in my family may have had this heart condition, and it wouldn't be easy to find out.

And yet, my medical history was crucial to treating our son. If the syndrome did not run in my family, the doctor counseled that my son would run an elevated risk of sudden death, and she'd be inclined to perform the corrective operation right away. But its rate of success at the time was just 50 percent. She was hoping she could postpone the operation for a few years until surgeons grew better at the procedure. The difference could mean life or death.

It had never before occurred to me that because I had no medical history, my son didn't have one either. I'd never needed a medical history. Neither did our son, until he turned 14 and began having symptoms.

As a New Jersey adoptee, I could access "nonidentifying" information about my biological family, including the vague medical histories available at the time of my relinquishment in the 1950's. But for the facts that might save my son's life, I would need to talk to blood relatives. EKG's weren't around back then; if a relative of mine had died suddenly, the doctors couldn't have known that it was from Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome. The doctor told me that the condition "skips around in families," and that, if my son had it, it was very likely that a sibling of mine had it, too.

But I didn't know if I had any family members. I didn't even know my real last name. My birth records were collecting dust in a vault somewhere. New Jersey law forbade me or my son from opening them. If I waited for court orders and hearings, the information might come too late. For the first time, I felt inadequate as a mother. Simply because my son was the child of an adoptee, his rights were being denied.

And so I set out to find my family any way I could. I lied, stole and broke a few laws. I assumed different identities. I called agencies pretending I was someone else. I got people to do things for me that would have gotten them fired if their superiors ever found out. I slipped records in and out of police departments. I copied confidential records and no one but the official who looked the other way was the wiser. I didn't care if I got arrested. All I cared about was keeping my son alive.

I didn't care about protecting the identity of my birth parents. What was their privacy compared to their grandson's life? My adoptive parents' feelings, which had always been important to me,

now dropped to the bottom of my list of priorities, too. I no longer cared that they never wanted me to search for my birth parents. Keeping my son alive was infinitely more important to me. I was a victim of a system that was set up to protect everyone in the adoption triangle except me. And that system was now making my son a victim too.

I found my birth family the hard way and learned that I had five siblings. Luckily, all of them are healthy. But I learned that after my son's ordeal, a second cousin of mine died of a heart condition that the doctors think was Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome. Sadly, if he had known about us, we could have helped to save his life.

Our son is doing fine now, after three heart operations. The successful one came two years into the search for my family, in response to an acute episode that required immediate treatment. By that time, the procedure was better studied than it had been at the condition's onset. Still, it was a difficult time for us - one that would have been much easier if I'd had access to my birth records. Both birth mothers' and adoptive parents' rights should be protected. But what about an adoptee's rights? We were too young to voice our opinions and desires at the time of our surrender, so our decisions were made for us.

But we're not children anymore. We should have the same right as any other adult to make decisions. And now the New Jersey Assembly has the power to help us. New Jersey Bill A3237, which would allow adopted adults the right to obtain copies of their original birth certificates, has been waiting a year to be heard by an Assembly committee; the Senate has already passed an identical bill. The passing of this bill would give rights not only to adoptees, but to their children, too.

Carol Barbieri is a songwriter and musician.

# Arrest made after baby's death

By: Ray Kisonas

story updated November 28. 2005 11:22AM

An infant who died during the weekend in Dundee suffered injuries from a beating, officials said, and a man has been arrested in connection with the case.

Monroe County sheriff's detectives identified the victim as 3-month-old Andrew Nowak. An autopsy Sunday indicated the baby died of a loss of blood due to internal injuries, police said.

A relative of the baby was arrested and a charge of open murder is being sought, said Detective Dave Davison. The 30-year-old man is being held in the county jail pending formal charges.

Monroe County Central Dispatch received a 911 call Saturday morning about a baby being unresponsive. Rescuers rushed the infant to Herrick Memorial Hospital, Tecumseh. From there the victim was flown by Life Flight helicopter to Toledo Children's Hospital.

Detective Davison said that shortly after arriving in Toledo, the baby went into full cardiac arrest and was pronounced dead at 12:31 p.m. Doctors at both hospitals reported to police that the baby had suffered injuries attributed to child abuse.

A Lucas County medical examiner ruled the death a homicide. The baby suffered a broken femur, numerous fractured ribs and a collapsed lung, officials said.

He died of blood loss due to those injuries.

During the police investigation, it was determined that the injuries were sustained between 3:30 and 8 a.m.

When the baby was found unresponsive in the morning, the mother called 911. Detective Davison said the family lives on Tecumseh St. just outside of town. In addition to the baby's mother and father, two siblings, an uncle and a grandmother live in the home.

Detective Davison said there is no known documented history of previous abuse cases reported at the home.

During the investigation, evidence was removed.

The name of the person arrested is being withheld until the Monroe County prosecutor's office issues a warrant, which was expected today.

Detective Jeff Corie also is investigating the case.

Winner of Pulitzer Prize for Tiger Force

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Article published Monday, November 28, 2005

### Dundee father charged in death of infant son

DUNDEE, Mich. — A Dundee man was charged with homicide yesterday after the brutal death of his two-month-old baby earlier this weekend.

Keith Nowak, 30, of 17104 Tecumseh Rd., was charged yesterday with a single count of homicide, and held last night in the Monroe County jail without bond.

His son, Andrew, was admitted Saturday to Herrick Memorial Health Center in Tecumseh, Mich., and flown to Toledo Children's Hospital via medical helicopter later that day. He was pronounced dead at 12:30 p.m., an hour after he arrived in Toledo.

Dr. Diane Barnett, Lucas County deputy coroner, said young Andrew died from multiple internal injuries, including a fractured femur, fractured ribs, a collapsed lung, and blood in his chest.

"These were definitely not accidental injuries. These were inflicted injuries," she said.

Lucas County Sheriff Tilman Crutchfield said Mr. Nowak was the boy's father, but did not know any more details relating to the case.

Mr. Nowak is due to be arraigned in Monroe County First District Court today, authorities said.

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### AP WALL STREET

Stocks, Business News

Monday, November 28, 2005

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Help

Article published Sunday, November 27, 2005

### Death of baby investigated in Monroe Co.

The Monroe County sheriff's office is investigating the death of a 2-month-old Dundee baby who died yesterday in Toledo Hospital.

The boy, whose name authorities declined to release, was pronounced dead about 12:30 p.m. He was taken to the hospital yesterday morning, authorities said. The Lucas County coroner's office is scheduled to perform an autopsy today.

The sheriff's office declined to release information about the death, saying it is awaiting the results of the autopsy to steer the investigation.

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#### AP WALL STREET

Stocks, Business News

# Baby's death boosts charge

Tuesday, November 29, 2005

By Nate Reens  
The Grand Rapids Press

GREENVILLE -- On the day Jeremy Gribben turned 23 last week, Greenville police arrested him for allegedly critically injuring his 5-month-old daughter while he cared for the girl. When Brianna Gribben died Thanksgiving Day, four days after she was admitted to Spectrum Health Butterworth Campus, the accusation changed from child abuse to an open murder count, authorities said.

"When that little girl dies, it changes everything," Montcalm County Prosecutor Andrea Krause said.

Gribben, whose birthday was Nov. 22, was arraigned Monday in Montcalm County District Court on the murder count, which carries a possible life imprisonment if he's convicted.

He is being held in the Montcalm County Jail on a \$1 million bond.

Krause declined to comment on the type of injuries the girl sustained.

The girl was found on the floor of her mother's home when the mother returned to the home where she lived and where Gribben was watching his daughter. Authorities said Gribben was the only one who could have hurt the girl on Nov. 21.

Neighbors said they did not notice anything that would have led them to believe the baby was in danger. Nearby residents said they had not met the people who lived at the home where the girl was injured.



# Defense witnesses say adoptive parents 'caring and concerned'

Tuesday, November 29, 2005

By John Agar  
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- A child-abuse expert was not surprised that Beryl and Jerome Richards, adoptive parents of 13 children, said they didn't know that some of their children allegedly were sexually assaulted by siblings.

Family therapist Arthur Daglow interviewed three of the children, and "came to the conclusion the parents were just not aware this was going on," he testified Monday.

"Nothing came out to my attention that would lead me to believe the Richards knew anything about this.

"Certainly, with this large of a family that the Richards have had, and this is just my opinion, I would be overwhelmed with that many kids. But I've also seen homes with one or two children and it's not been known."

The state is trying to sever the couple's parental rights to 12 of their adopted children, who were put into foster care in the spring after authorities accused the couple of punishing the children with whippings and ignoring complaints of alleged sexual assaults.

The defense tried to blunt those allegations, and called witnesses who described the couple as ideal, caring parents. Witnesses said they could not imagine the couple whipping the children with leather belts and extension cords.

"They only showed themselves to be caring and concerned parents," said Marcella Hanley, a high-school teacher.

Carolyn VanBemden, who has known the family since 1978, said she never saw any signs of abuse. The only discipline she witnessed was "only verbal, and then it was done in a modulated tone of voice. They were never screamed at or yelled at."

"The kids were just under fantastic control," said Mercedes Randolph-Coburn, Jerome Richards' ex-wife.

She has two daughters with her ex-husband, and considers the couple to be her friends. She said she never saw the children hit with leather belts or extension cords, as some of the children have testified.

The harshest penalty she observed was one child standing in a corner for 20 minutes.

Beryl Richards' mother, Shirley Eikner, said her daughter was, if anything, too lenient with the children. She said her daughter might threaten to get out a wooden spoon, but she never saw her use it.

Last week, however, a defense witness said Beryl Richards acknowledged she spanked one of the children with a belt. Children testified both parents punished them with up to 75 "licks" from a leather belt or extension cord.

Defense witnesses also disputed allegations the children were forced to eat rotting food. Several witnesses said they had hearty meals with the family, and never saw spoiled food.

John Tobian, pastor of their church, Christ Community, said he worked closely with the family for several years, and none of the children raised concerns.

When asked if he had seen the children getting spanked or cowering, he said: "Quite the opposite. The young children would be hanging on their parents."

# Toddler's death ruled accidental drowning

FLUSHING TOWNSHIP

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, November 29, 2005

By Ron Fonger

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FLUSHING TWP. - A medical examiner's determination that a township toddler accidentally drowned has the child's parents hoping her 3-year-old brother will be returned to them in time for Christmas, their attorney says. Jamie M. Vamos, 20 months, died Sept. 1 after apparently falling into a family swimming pool at her home on W. Carpenter Road. But police started a criminal investigation after a doctor at Hurley Medical Center and a Genesee County Sheriff's Department investigator believed they saw signs that Jamie had been sexually abused.

Robert Gerds, administrator for the Oakland County Medical Examiner's Office, would not comment Monday on what his office investigated in addition to the cause of death.

Jamie's parents, Steven and Kristy Vamos, hope the ruling means their son can return home after being taken from them three months ago by the state Department of Human Services amid questions concerning his sister's death. Through their Owosso attorney, Michael Stewart, the couple have denied any wrongdoing and maintained the medical examiner would find the death was an accident.

"Their reaction is: 'Why don't we have him home?'" said Stewart. "We hope to have the (other) child back in the home. (The family) just wants to put this behind them."

Township Police Chief Douglas K. Kennedy would not comment on the status of the department's investigation but said Genesee County Prosecutor David Leyton would decide what to do next.

Kennedy also would not comment on findings by the medical examiner's office or what they mean to the criminal investigation.

"One of the things we are going to want to do is wait until we can get a written report before we close that case," Kennedy said. "I know they (Oakland County) had access to statements that were made by the emergency room doctor. I know they looked into that."

Leyton said he would review a report from the medical examiner before taking any action. Leyton's office represented the Department of Human Services when it petitioned to have the Vamos' son removed from their home.

The couple have had only supervised visitation since that time but recently were granted unlimited supervised visits with their son, Stewart said.

Larry Daly, a spokesman for Hurley, said the hospital would not comment on a pending criminal investigation or an active court case involving a petition to terminate parental rights. A hearing on that petition is scheduled for later this month.

## QUICK TAKE

The Vamos case at a glance

Jamie Vamos died Sept. 1 after she apparently fell into a pool at her home and drowned.

The 20-month-old was taken to Hurley Medical Center after she was found in the pool. An emergency room doctor found severe rectal and vaginal bleeding, sparking a criminal investigation.

Several weeks after starting its own investigation, the Oakland County Medical Examiner's Office has ruled Jamie Vamos' death an accidental drowning.

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# Boy, 4, drowns in tub at apartment

Tuesday, November 29, 2005

By Ken Kolker  
The Grand Rapids Press

GRANDVILLE -- The young mother sat in the hallway of the apartment building and screamed as her lifeless 4-year-old boy lay next to her on the floor.

"She came to me and was hanging onto me," neighbor Helen Thornburg said. "She was screaming. I kept telling her, 'Let's just pray.' I kept telling her she was a good mother."

Kyle Payton drowned Monday in a bathtub at Wimbledon Apartments, 4200 Wimbledon Dr. SW, police said.

Police said they were called to the apartment shortly after 7 p.m. When they arrived, the boy was unresponsive. EMS crews tried to resuscitate the child.

Julie Payton, 32, told police her son was taking a bath. When she checked on him, she found he was "floating in the water," Police Chief Vern Snyder said.

Officers questioned the mother and an autopsy was being performed today at Spectrum Health Blodgett Campus. They believe the boy was in the water for less than five minutes.

"We'll compare the reports and statements we've got with results of the autopsy," Snyder said.

"It raises some questions when a 4 1/2-year-old drowns. You're not dealing with an infant," Snyder said. "It doesn't mean he couldn't have slipped and fallen and was knocked unconscious."

Thornburg said she heard the screams from inside her first-floor apartment, but thought they were coming from playing children. She opened her door when the screaming continued.

The woman, who lives in the apartment next door, was sitting next to her boy and asking someone to call 911, Thornburg said.

"It was sad," she said. "I couldn't take it. I've lost grandchildren. I've lost a son. This was too much."

Neighbor Pat Craden said she can't imagine the death being anything but an accident. The mother's screams were "blood curdling," she said.

"The pain, I could feel it," Craden said. "She kept screaming 'Save my baby, save my baby. Oh, Jesus, please let my baby live.'"

She said the boy lay in the hallway naked and the mother, wearing a nightgown, collapsed in the hallway while neighbors tried to help her and resuscitate the boy.

Craden said she talked to the boy once, several weeks ago, when he excitedly announced to her "We're going to church."

She learned the mother and boy attended her church, Resurrection Life, in Wyoming.

After the drowning, Payton, her pastor and others gathered in Craden's apartment for several hours before the mother left in the care of her parents. The child's father also came, Craden said. He kept telling Payton to "Give it to the Lord. He's with Jesus now," Craden said.

The woman and her boy moved into the apartment complex several months ago, Thornburg said. "She appeared to be a good mom," she said. "He was a cute little guy. He was always happy."

# **Cass City band director charged with CSC**

TRACI ANDERSON-WEISENBACH, The Huron Daily Tribune

11/29/2005

CASS CITY — Sanilac County Prosecuting Attorney James Young issued criminal charges against Cass City Band Director Doug Burtch Monday after months of investigation into allegations of criminal sexual conduct with a student.

According to a press release, Burtch is being charged with two counts of third-degree criminal sexual conduct, which is a 15-year felony, and two alternate counts of fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct, a two-year misdemeanor.

The press release stated Burtch's arraignment on these charges is scheduled for 1 p.m. Dec. 9 in Sanilac County District Court.

The charges stem from an investigation led by Detective/Sgt. Brian Ferguson of the Michigan State Police Sandusky post. The charges are related to incidents investigators say occurred from December 2003 through May 2004.

The student who made the allegations has since graduated from Cass City High School.

Burtch was suspended from his band director position in July. The board hired interim substitute Band Director Todd Thamer in August to fill in during Burtch's absence.

Cass City Public Schools Superintendent Ken Micklash said the school board will request a copy of the police investigation report from the prosecuting attorney's office through the Freedom of Information Act. After reviewing it, the board will determine if any further action will be taken other than the suspension.

Micklash said the board will be meeting to discuss the superintendent search on Dec. 12, and discussion on Burtch likely will take place at this meeting. A decision may be made at this meeting or at the regular board meeting Dec. 19, he said.

Band Boosters President Debra Kranz said the band boosters believe in Burtch's innocence.

"We still support Mr. Burtch," she said.

She said she and other Band Boosters are surprised about Young's decision to issue a warrant for Burtch's arrest.

“I don’t think they have enough evidence, but they have to go through the investigation process, and they must believe they have enough evidence to (issue the warrant),” she said.

Kranz, who has a son in the band program, said it is still possible the charges against Burtch could be dropped as the legal process continues.

““We’re hoping that happens,” she said. “(The Band Boosters) thoroughly believe he didn’t do this.”

She said she’s not sure why the allegations were made by the student, but she knows what these allegations have done to Burtch and the successful band program he developed.

“It’s been devastating to the program and the kids,” she said. “It’s sad that it had to come to this.”

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# Thanks, nanny state, but no thanks: Butt out of our bad habits

Tuesday, November 29, 2005

Bay City Times Editorial

If you've got a kid in the car and you're smoking, you're busted, should state lawmakers approve a recent proposal in Lansing.

Rep. John Moolenaar, R-Midland, wants police to pull over cars in which adults are smoking tobacco in the presence of children.

It's a really short, little law to take yet another slap at what almost all people these days agree is a nasty habit.

Why, we've all seen children cooped up in cars, with mom or dad - maybe both! - puffing away, Moolenaar notes.

Yes, we have. Smoking tobacco, or anything else, around children is not a good idea. Studies have shown that secondhand smoke can cause illness in children, such as ear infections.

Secondhand smoke also can cause cancer.

Parents who smoke around their kids, including in cars, aren't doing their children any favors.

But how far are we willing to let the nanny state intrude into the private lives of families?

While we're at it, we might as well mandate the flossing of teeth, twice daily.

For something that would improve the health of our children probably more than anything else, why not outlaw fatty fast food for anyone under the age of 18?

That probably is going a bit too far.

Just as this intrusive proposal is a reach.

Thanks for the concern.

But we don't want a nanny.

Not in our cars; not anywhere in our private lives.

# Community kicks off holidays with food collection during parade

Tuesday, November 29, 2005

By Greg Chandler  
The Grand Rapids Press

ZEELAND -- Five-year-old Tristan Bruizeman and his 3-year-old sister, Trinity, peered down Main Avenue, hoping to catch a glimpse of Santa Claus.

Fortunately, the Zeeland siblings did not have to wait long. The man in the red suit led the city's annual Christmas parade Monday night, then came back around again later in the parade.

Tristan and Trinity were with their grandmother, Deb Bruizeman, who has made taking the kids to the parade an annual event. "It's a good tradition," she said.

Santa was followed by a horse-drawn wagon, occupied by boys and girls from local Scout troops who collected food and other nonperishable items from spectators. The items will be donated to His Harvest Stand and Fishers of Men Ministries, two Zeeland-based organizations that assist those in need.

Parade organizers estimate more than 2,000 items were collected.

"It was toothpaste, soap, beans and corn, macaroni and cheese, spaghetti -- you name it, (it was donated)," said Greg Visser, a downtown merchant who played an active role in organizing the parade.

Some spectators brought brown paper bags filled with as many as 25 items. "I was impressed with how many big bags there were," Visser said.

Kathie Berens, a Zeeland resident who had never been to the Christmas parade, said she liked the idea of having a food collection in connection with the parade. "I think it's an outstanding idea.

"It's great to come together as a community and be able to share."

Berens came to the parade with her children, 8-year-old Mick and 5-year-old Jenna.

The children cheered as decorated trucks and buses came down the parade route, honking their horns.

Spectators also were treated to music from local marching bands. Three-year-old Reese Meyering squealed as she saw the Zeeland High School band turn the corner from Main onto Elm Street.

"It's the band!" Reese shouted.

Hundreds lined the parade route in nearly 60-degree temperatures and skies that cleared just before Santa's arrival after an all-day rain that had organizers concerned.

"We watched the radar all day, but we were confident (we'd get the parade in)," said Ann Query, executive director of the Zeeland Chamber of Commerce. "We had important work to do, collecting foodstuffs for people who need it."

While the Christmas parade marks the official start of holiday activities in Zeeland, a number of other events are planned in the downtown area during the next several weeks. These include a "Shop for Hospice" night Monday, in which a portion of downtown sales will be donated to Hospice of Holland.

# Meijer packs up food donations

Tuesday, November 29, 2005

The Grand Rapids Press

'Tis the season for giving and, for many local families, food is the most pressing need. This year, giving to food banks never has been easier.

All 171 Meijer stores are running a special food drive through Dec. 10. Shoppers can pick up a pre-packaged bag of nonperishable foods just inside the store entrance. They will buy the bag for \$10 along with the rest of their groceries. A bin to donate the food drive bags is against the wall opposite the checkout stands.

"This is a win-win partnership with our community," said Kathy Lubbers, service coordinator at the new Meijer store on Holland's north side. "Ten dollars is an amount a lot of people feel like they can afford to help feed a neighbor. We know the needs are great."

Each Meijer store will offer 200 filled bags for sale. Staff at each store picked a local food pantry to be the recipient of their efforts. Lubbers' store selected Core City Community Development Association. Bags from Meijer on Holland's south side will go to Community Action House.

Volunteers from each organization are helping Meijer employees stuff the grocery bags, assembly style. Each bag includes peanut butter, canned tuna, apple juice, soup, spaghetti, fruit preserves, crackers and tomato sauce.



News

## **Benefits to help Cobb shelter this week**

Monday, November 28, 2005 1:16 PM EST

### **Applebee's and West End Car Wash plan events this week to aid the Catherine Cobb Domestic Violence Shelter.**

From staff reports

ADRIAN - Applebee's Neighborhood Grill and Bar in Adrian will host a fund-raising event for the Catherine Cobb Domestic Violence Shelter from 6 p.m. Thursday to 1 a.m. Friday.

The second annual "No Excuse for Abuse" benefit will include two raffles with prizes donated by more than 75 businesses, according to a news release.

A \$20 raffle ticket will make the purchaser eligible to win one of more than 100 prizes. For the first 50 prizes, which will be given away between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m., ticket holders must be present to win. For the final 50 prizes, ticket holders do not need to be present to win. Another raffle, with \$5 tickets, has a total of 10 prizes. Raffle drawings begin at 6 p.m.

A disc jockey will entertain diners, and music by the band Night Crew will begin at 10 p.m.

All proceeds from the raffle tickets, as well as 10 percent of all food purchases throughout the evening, will go to the shelter.

Raffle tickets can be purchased at Applebee's, 1396 S. Main St., or at Family Counseling and Children's Services, 220 N. Main St., through Dec. 1.

Last year's benefit raised more than \$3,000, according to the shelter.

Two other benefits in the coming week also will benefit the domestic violence shelter.

- During Dining to Donate at the Adrian Applebee's, customers who present a Dining to Donate flier to their server will have 10 percent of their bill go to the shelter. Dining to Donate is scheduled for 3 to 10 p.m. today and Tuesday. Dining to Donate fliers are available at Family Counseling and Children's Services.

- On Wednesday, West End Car Wash, 1107 W. Beecher St., will donate \$1 to the shelter for every vehicle washed.

For information about the Catherine Cobb Domestic Violence Shelter or any of these events, call Family Counseling

## Unemployment rates fell across Michigan in October

LANSING, Mich. (AP) -- Unemployment rates fell in all of Michigan's 17 major labor market areas in October, state officials said Monday.

Seasonally unadjusted jobless rates declined from September's levels in part because schools hired more support staff as the new academic year kicked into high gear, the state said. Compared to a year ago, most of the job gain across the state has come in the service-providing sector.

Total employment rose in 14 of Michigan's 17 regions from September to October. About 18,000 jobs were added statewide in local government education, while 5,000 jobs were added in state government education.

About 10,000 jobs were lost in leisure and hospitality services as the summer and early fall tourism seasons ended.

The regional unemployment rates ranged from a low of 3.3 percent in the Ann Arbor area to a high of 6 percent in the Flint and Detroit areas, the state Department of Labor and Economic Growth said.

Michigan's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 6.1 percent in October. The national rate was 5 percent.

National and state unemployment rates are seasonally adjusted to remove seasonal influences such as production cycles, holidays, model changeovers and climate conditions. Local labor market numbers are not seasonally adjusted.

The state's major labor market areas, their seasonally unadjusted jobless rates for October and the change since September were:

- Ann Arbor, 3.3 percent, down from 4.1 percent.
- Battle Creek, 5.2 percent, down from 6 percent.
- Bay City, 5.1 percent, down from 5.9 percent.
- Detroit-Warren-Livonia, 6 percent, down from 6.4 percent.
- Flint, 6 percent, down from 7 percent.
- Grand Rapids-Wyoming, 4.7 percent, down from 5.4 percent.
- Holland-Grand Haven, 4 percent, down from 4.6 percent.
- Jackson, 5.2 percent, down from 6 percent.
- Kalamazoo-Portage, 4.3 percent, down from 5 percent.
- Lansing-East Lansing, 4.8 percent, down from 5.5 percent.
- Monroe, 4.7 percent, down from 5.6 percent.
- Muskegon-Norton Shores, 5.6 percent, down from 6.1 percent.
- Niles-Benton Harbor, 5.3 percent, down from 6.2 percent.
- Saginaw-Saginaw Township North, 5.9 percent, down from 6.9 percent.
- Upper Peninsula, 4.5 percent, down from 5.2 percent.
- Northeast Lower Michigan, 5.4 percent, down from 5.9 percent.
- Northwest Lower Michigan, 4.7 percent, down from 5.2 percent.

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On the Net:

Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth:

<http://www.michigan.gov/mdcd>

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Michigan Report

November 28, 2005

## **LOCAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATES DROP IN OCTOBER**

Seasonally unadjusted unemployment rates in all of Michigan's 17 labor markets fell during October, according to figures released by the Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

In the 17 markets, jobless rates declined from September by an average of .7 percent, and all of the labor markets showed jobless rates of no more than 6 percent for the month.

The state also saw employment gains in 14 of the market areas, the department said. There were drops in total employment in the Detroit-Warren-Livonia market, the state's largest, while Northwest Lower Michigan and Northeast Lower Michigan both showed larger than anticipated drops in employment following the end of the summer tourist season.

Flint recorded the largest percentage drop in unemployment during the month, falling from 7 percent to 6 percent from September to October. At 6 percent, it had the highest local unemployment along with the Detroit market.

The Ann Arbor market had the lowest unemployment rate at 3.3 percent, down from 4.1 percent in September.

Among the counties, Washtenaw had the lowest unemployment rate at 3.3 percent followed by both Mackinac and Isabella counties at 3.4 percent. Baraga County had the highest unemployment rate at 7.8 percent. Wayne County had an unemployment rate of 7.3 percent.

## B.C. gets \$1 million to help homeless

Stacy Hanna  
*The Enquirer*

Battle Creek is the recent recipient of a million-dollar opportunity, a chance to put a dent in the plight of homeless citizens.

Michigan State Housing Development Authority announced Nov. 18 it would grant \$10 million to facilitate housing projects for the "chronically homeless" in eight Michigan communities, diverting \$1 million of those funds to the Cereal City.

According to the Calhoun County Homeless Management Information System, more than 250 of Battle Creek's poorest citizens have been identified as chronically homeless, a condition defined by the state as people with a disabling condition who have been homeless for more than a year.

Although \$1 million would provide only 10 to 15 single-person housing units, the money — for which there was no application process — could be the first in a pipeline of state and federal housing funds that could make its way to Battle Creek, helping to erase chronic homelessness in the area.

"One of the nice things about this project is that you've been pre-selected, there's no competition," said Sally Harrison, MSHDA spokeswoman. "Similar projects in the state have gone on to receive additional funds for additional housing. If this project is successful (in Battle Creek) there could definitely be more money in the future."

Being selected for the project increases the coalition's chances for receiving federal funding next year, Harrison said.

Although the offer is too good to pass up, said members of the Greater Battle Creek Homeless Coalition, it does present some challenges.

"It's a wonderful opportunity, one we've been saying we needed for the past 10 years," said Diane Beckley of the city's planning office. "We're being handed on a platter the opportunity to address those needs, but it's going to take a lot of fast work. We have to quickly come up with the means to provide programming for these people. We can't house them and then have to evict them because they don't have support services in place."

The coalition has several housing options to consider and little more than two weeks to present an acceptable proposal to MSHDA.

According to Hunsicker, the coalition might consider a leasing program, rehabilitating vacant historic properties or new construction.

"We have until December 15," said Elaine Hunsicker, coalition member and director of The Haven. "But MSHDA will help us through the process of fine-tuning the plans."

The funds will be allocated in the form of a forgivable 50-year loan, and must be matched by an additional \$250,000, to be secured by the local homeless coalition.

"The matching funds have to be raised and they can't be used for programming," Hunsicker said. "It's a capital match and we still will have to find support service funding."

MSHDA officials say they want Battle Creek's project running within a year, Harrison said.

As part of the state grant, Detroit will receive \$3 million and Battle Creek, Benton Harbor, Flint, Lansing, Muskegon, Pontiac and Saginaw each will receive \$1 million.

*Stacy Hanna covers business. She can be reached at 966-0468 or [sthanna@battlecr.gannett.com](mailto:sthanna@battlecr.gannett.com)*

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## **Prominent fathers' rights attorney takes custody case of G.L. soldier**

### **Man represented dad in case of Elian Gonzalez**

By Stacey Range  
Lansing State Journal

One of the nation's top defenders of fathers' rights is taking the case of a Grand Ledge soldier who says he lost joint custody of his son because of his Iraq service.

Jeffery Leving, a renowned advocate and legal consultant who represented the father of Elian Gonzalez, said he will act as co-counsel for Michigan National Guard Spc. Joe McNeilly.

"This is an outrageous case and just one example of how the rights of military fathers are disregarded," Leving said Monday from his Chicago office. "This has implications far beyond his case."

#### **Advertisement**

Leving, who commands an hourly fee of \$400, is taking the case pro bono. He will be the lead attorney and will work with a local lawyer to be hired because Leving is not licensed to practice by the Michigan Bar.

The change of attorneys is scheduled to occur Wednesday before Ingham County Family Court Judge Janelle Lawless. McNeilly said the change was the result of a mutual agreement based on differences of opinion with his current attorney, Pat Boog of Lansing.

McNeilly, 33, claims his 15-month tour in Iraq is the only reason he is being denied shared custody of his 10-year-old son, Joey.

Upon McNeilly's return, the Ingham County Friend of the Court refused to reverse an agreement he signed giving the boy's mother, Holly Erb, full custody while he was gone.

Erb and her husband, Stephen, say the case is about McNeilly's parenting skills.

But Leving disagrees.

"While he was putting his life at risk to protect our country, he was sandbagged at home in our judicial system," he said.

Leving played a pivotal role in the 1999-2000 international custody dispute between Elian's Miami relatives and his Cuban father, to whom he was returned.

Contact Stacey Range at 377-1157 or [srange@lsj.com](mailto:srange@lsj.com).

Bill update

- Gov. Jennifer Granholm plans to sign legislation aimed at protecting military parents serving overseas from losing custody of their children because of their deployment when it reaches her desk, spokeswoman Liz Boyd said.

Published November 29, 2005  
[ From the Lansing State Journal ]

## **Wilson: Who's watching watchers? Guardian system has obvious flaws; attention needed**

Legal guardianships generally have been a difficult system in which to correct problems. Problems have been identified periodically, like the recent Public Guardian in Eaton County, Charles Zwick.

He was indicted and punished for contempt related to the mishandling of funds from two women's estates.

Statewide reforms of this system have a large number of advocates who have spent an inordinate amount of time in trying to correct problems. Making recommendations and proposing and passing legislation have been difficult. Implementing recommendations is difficult, too.

Calhoun County Probate Judge Phillip Harter is considered a leader among probate judges on guardianship issues. He was asked by the current Michigan Task Force on Elder Abuse to discuss the status of recommendations made by the task force on guardianships and conservatorships in its final report on Sept. 10, 1998. Harter qualified his several page response by saying that he had only an opinion, not a fact-based response:

"Recommendation 1, (from the 1998 report): Each county should establish a local resource for citizens to help assess the need for guardianships and conservatorships, to share resources, to resolve issues outside the probate court systems, and to assist in developing alternatives to guardianships and conservatorships."

Judge Harter said little response had been made on this major recommendation. Status in Eaton County? Who knows?

Sally Balch Hurme, an attorney employed by AARP for many years as a specialist on guardianship issues, reports that great progress has been made in many other states. In a recent presentation to the Michigan task force, Hurme reports, "To reduce the risk of inappropriate action by guardians and conservators, EPIC (Estates and Protected Individuals Code) reforms called for (among other things): "Professional guardians and family guardians must post bond."

News reports indicate that Zwick was not bonded.



It was impossible for me to get additional information on the extent of changes, or lack thereof, that have been made in Eaton County. Requested information was denied. Perhaps it is still under investigation.

These public bodies do express the thought that Zwick was the problem; now that he has been replaced by another "public guardian", everything will be good, right?

Wrong!

The lack of bonding for Zwick documents that a problem existed at the time of the embezzlement reported, only months ago.

As a volunteer for Eaton County Chief Probate Judge Michael Skinner several years ago, I know significant flaws were evidenced in Zwick's work. He had not seen all of the wards assigned to him for years, a serious flaw.

Yet this public guardian was making decisions about a person's health and welfare without knowing anything about them. This was reported to the judge, who saw no need to change his guardianship system.

Significant issues could also exist now in the selection and appointment criteria of the new public guardian. This is public money being spent. And what about the accountability system for this new law firm?

John Willson lives in Delta Township.

*MIRS*

*November 28, 2005*

## **Granholm Encourages Volunteerism**

In conjunction with her Thanksgiving trip to Iraq, Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM** thanked Michigan citizens for their commitment to service in her weekly radio address.

"I'm grateful for the generosity and compassion that the citizens of our great state show every single day," Granholm told the audience. "This year, I hope that Michigan families will not only give great gifts to loved ones, but the great gift of their time to those in need across the state."

Granholm encouraged residents to help the less fortunate during the holiday season.

Granholm cited studies that show 29 percent of Americans volunteer their time whereas 49 percent of Michiganders volunteer their time.

"One hour a week of your time will brighten the day of a senior citizen, or feed someone in need of a meal, or, through mentoring, forever change the life of a child," she said. "These are all lasting gifts of service and I encourage you to get involved."

# Meeting to focus on Medicare drug benefit

Tuesday, November 29, 2005

Muskegon Chronicle

## FROM LOCAL REPORTS

Staffers from the office of U.S. Rep. Pete Hoekstra, R-Holland, will host a town hall meeting in Muskegon Monday to discuss the new voluntary Medicare drug benefit that becomes available Jan. 1.

Hoekstra's representatives will be joined by an official from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and others participating in the new plan.

The meeting is scheduled for 3:30 p.m. in the Collegiate Hall at Muskegon Community College, 221 S. Quarterline.

The enrollment period for the Medicare drug program started this month and runs through May 15, 2006. Enrollment is required to participate in the program. Anyone who enrolls by Dec. 31 will receive benefits starting Jan. 1, 2006.

For those who join the program, costs will vary depending on the plan chosen. In general, participants will pay a monthly premium of \$32 and a yearly deductible, up to the first \$250 in 2006, according to the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Participants also will pay a portion of their prescription drug costs.

People with limited incomes will get more financial assistance under the Medicare plan.

Senior citizens also are encouraged to call Michigan Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program volunteer counselors at (800) 803-7174, visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) or call (800) MEDICARE 24 hours a day, seven days a week to receive free, personalized information about the new drug benefit.

Additional assistance is available by calling the Social Security Administration at (800) 772-1213.

# **Medicare talk is Wednesday**

Tuesday, November 29, 2005

## **THE SAGINAW NEWS**

Those with questions about new Medicare drug coverage may attend a presentation at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday in the Clowater Lecture Theater at HealthSource Saginaw, 3340 Hospital in Saginaw Township.

Sally Tyler of the Michigan Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program will offer information about the new entitlement.

# Clinic a big help for the little ones

Tuesday, November 29, 2005

By Jessi De La Cruz

jdelacruz@citpat.com -- 768-4918

Jackson's first school-based health center is coming into its own.

The Northeast Health Center -- attached to Northeast Elementary School on the city's east side -- has seen 576 patients since it opened in July. The \$1.2 million center, offering medical and dental care, is open to Jackson Public Schools students age 18 and younger.

Inside the health center, brightly colored pictures made by students decorate the walls. Staff members created a separate waiting room for students and a donated fish tank bubbles quietly in the reception area.

"We're pretty well set," said Charisse Green, health center manager. "Whatever a child would typically be sent to the doctor for, that's who we see here."

The 3,500-square-foot center has three examination rooms and three dental chairs and exam areas along with a room for consultations. A part-time nurse practitioner sees patients two days a week, but the center is looking to hire a full-time medical provider in January.

That way, the health center will be equipped to see medical patients five days a week, Green said. The nurse practitioner is swamped each day she's in, she said.

When the center first opened, the staff had less than 10 signed forms giving consent for treatment of Jackson students. Now, they have more than 700 consent forms, and hope to increase that number in the next year, Green said.

"It's a new concept for Jackson," she said. "People have to get used to it."

Run by the Center for Family Health, the Northeast Health Center gets referrals from other Jackson-area health clinics. The center's recently finished parking lot and a soon-to-be-installed awning also will help people find it, Green said.

Northeast officials are hoping more people will learn about their services once the center at the Middle School at Parkside opens.

Parkside's health center, which will serve people ages 12 to 21 in Jackson County, will be paid for by a three-year, state grant paying \$175,000 yearly.

Like the Northeast Health Center, Parkside's center also is in partnership with the Center for Family Health. It will be housed in Parkside's former wood shop and is set to open in April. School-based health centers are new to Jackson so it takes time for people to become familiar with them, said Molly Kaser, executive director of the Center for Family Health.

Northeast's patient base will grow in the next year, Kaser said.

And the opening of Parkside's center will benefit both sites.

"Word of mouth is our best form of attracting new patients," she said. "Parkside -- being the only middle school and in a centrally located area -- when people hear about it, it will stick a little more."

For those who have found the health center, they're committed to going back.

Parent Diane Clay-Payne has had her seven children seen at the Northeast center and is looking forward to visiting the Parkside site, too.

"It's closer, it's quicker and it's not as congested," Clay-Payne said. "It keeps down all the running around."

# Michigan Works! picks outstanding alumnus

By JANE NORDBERG, Gazette Writer

November 28, 2005

ONTONAGON - When Karen Heck moved to the Upper Peninsula in July 2003, she had never even heard of the Michigan Works! program.

In January, she'll be honored as the Western U.P. Michigan Works! outstanding alumnus for 2005.

"Karen's a heck of a role model," said Western U.P. Michigan Works counselor Janet Dulong, citing Heck's determination in getting a college degree and pursuing a career a little later in life than most.

Heck had been a homemaker for over twenty years, but had a limited employment history and few occupational skills when she moved to the Upper Peninsula two years ago. What she did have was a vision for her future.

"I knew what I wanted to do and began taking the prerequisite classes downstate but I got a lot of help from Michigan Works!, especially Janet Dulong, who was awesome," said Heck, now a registered nurse at Superior Home Nursing and Hospice in Ontonagon.

In August 2003, Heck entered the Finlandia University classroom as a non-traditional student, a daunting challenge.

"It was refreshing to be with younger students, but at the same time, I wasn't the only older student so I had a lot of support," Heck said.

The worst part was trying to juggle homework with housework, she added.

Michigan Works! helped every semester by providing assistance towards tuition, and supplying a uniform and shoes for her internship. The program also paid for a review class for the registered nursing exam.

# Salvation Army in dire need of funds, volunteers

Web-posted Nov 29, 2005

By JERRY WOLFFE  
Of The Oakland Press

The cupboards are nearly bare at The Salvation Army and shelters are busting at the seams with about 1,700 people a night seeking a safe haven from the cold.

"We have a tough situation," said Russ Russell, the director of development at The Salvation Army facility in Southfield. "I think we're just seeing the tip of the iceberg."

He noted auto industry-related layoffs and terminations are creating even greater need than in the past.

"When someone is in need, they think of The Salvation Army. We provide 4.1 million points of service a year," said Russell, referring to the number of people fed daily or given other assistance, such as the paying of utility bills or housing them in some of the Army's 40 shelters in Oakland, Wayne and Macomb counties.

"I'm begging like I've never begged before because we're finding more and more people that don't have what they need to survive."

The working poor are especially being hit hard, he said, because the "cost of living is skyrocketing. How do you take care of a family on a \$7 an hour job?"

Each night, The Salvation Army in the Detroit metro area houses 1,700 men, women and children. It also serves 7,000 meals a day.

"We have social workers at each community center and we're finding more and more people losing jobs," Russell said. "They are scared to death. Others are suffering because of cuts in pay. Many have to decide if they're going to feed their kids, turn on the heat or pay for medicines."

The number of people The Salvation Army helped in 2004 was up 33 percent from the previous year and has increased an additional 20 percent this year.

The Salvation Army's annual budget is \$61 million for Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties with about one-third of that coming from government funding. The remainder is from donations from the public.

"I challenge the church community," said Russell. He said that the amount people tithe is "1.8 percent of gross income" - far less than the 10 percent most churches expect people to give.

"We've seen less dollars given for local needs this year because of the tsunami in Asia and hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma that hit the United States, causing hundreds of millions of dollars in damage," Russell said.

He said donations are \$8 million less than last year.

"The Salvation Army is really (society's) safety net and the safety net is about to break," he said.

"We're fighting the battle. We challenge anyone with a heart to help us."

## **To help out**

To donate money or be a volunteer for The Salvation Army, telephone (877) 725-6424.

Posted: 11-26-2005

## **Future uncertain for Ludington Corps of The Salvation Army**

By STEVE BEGNOCHE

Ludington Daily News Managing Editor

The Salvation Army Ludington Corps is at a crossroads.

Depending on what happens in the next several months, The Salvation Army's 110-year presence in Mason County could continue.

Or this could be the last Christmas Mason and Oceana county residents are served by a The Salvation Army Ludington Corps.

The local corps is facing a review in early 2006 at which time The Salvation Army District Headquarters in Grand Rapids might recommend to Territorial Headquarters in Chicago to close the Ludington Corps.

Ludington Corps Major Jon Welch acknowledges the situation is critical.

"It's just kind of scary because of wanting to help people in the community with what we do, but if we're not financially (solvent), for our headquarters, it's a possibility," Welch said of the potential closure.

"I just can't imagine our community without The Salvation Army to help people when things aren't going well," said Deb Wright, chair of The Salvation Army Ludington Corps advisory board. "It really frightens me to think of the community without them here to help."

The local Corps has been trying to cut expenses and raise revenues before the review expected in February 2006.

"Since Kim (his wife) and I have been here we have tried to cut in certain areas."

The Corps closed, then sold, the thrift store it once ran on South James Street when it found it was giving away more clothes and goods than selling. This year the Corps leased a storefront in a strip mall on Ludington Avenue east of Nelson Road to reopen a thrift store after receiving many requests to do so, Welch said.

The store has had a few months of solid and profitable operations, but because of startup costs and ongoing lease costs, Welch said continuing its operation "is an unsure thing right now. It's partly why District Headquarters is concerned about us. We were hoping it would have a greater income for us, but it hasn't been as good as we hoped as we it would be."

Welch, while concerned, is still hoping and working for the best.

"Next year is another year," he said. "We've been getting a lot of donations for the store. People have been very generous. That part has been great."

The store is staffed by a mix of volunteers and paid staff.

"We basically opened the store because people were asking us to and also to help with expenses to help us keep our operations running," he said. "We were hoping to get revenue from that and that we could help more people with social needs."

It just hasn't panned out as well as hoped.

Other actions the Ludington Corps has taken or is considering include:



- Discontinued its After School Drop In Center program to save the costs of employing a program director and because local schools are doing more after-school programs reducing the need for The Salvation Army program.
- Reduced food pack contents from a seven-day package to a five-day package.
- Reduced the cost of the Christmas meal boxes by providing a smaller ham and half-gallons of milk instead of turkeys and larger amounts of milk.
- Is considering selling all or part of the two lots and property it owns on East Melendy Street and is considering a capital campaign to be able to replace the 1924 buildings (two) with one modern, more efficient structure. Currently it uses a church building and an old house. The buildings including the old St. John's Lutheran Church dating back to 1924, were acquired by The Salvation Army in 1961 when Major Welch's parents, Jeffery and Shirley Welch, were leading the Ludington Corps. They were in charge here from 1958-1965.
- Applying for more grants.
- Consider establishing an operating endowment and visiting major donors in the two counties. Both of these are planned for early next year.

Except for about a year at about the time of the Great Depression, The Salvation Army has had a presence in Ludington and Mason County since 1895, Welch said.

"We've been doing Christmas (here) since at least 1900. It started off with mainly food and eventually moved into toys," Welch said.

Currently The Salvation Army has about 40 people on its local church's membership roll.

Despite all the cuts, the efforts at the store and with the Red Kettle Campaign, the situation remains critical.

"You can only cut so much," Welch said. "It costs money to keep the lights on in the building."

Asked what he wanted to tell the community, Welch replied, "Thank you to the community for helping us out in donations. We want to continue for maybe another 100 years if we can, but we can never continue without community support. That's what's really kept us going, community support. We just want to say thank to people for helping."

Advisory Board Chair Deb Wright noted "Think how many times a day people say, 'ask The Salvation Army' when someone is need of help. What would we do if The Salvation Army wasn't there?"

"It scares me."

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# Bell ringers sought for The Salvation Army

November 28, 2005

By STEVE BEGNOCHE  
Ludington Daily News Managing Editor

Riverton Township resident Vera Negele will again this year ring a bell for The Salvation Army's Red Kettle campaign.

She does it because she enjoys the experience and because she remembers a time when The Salvation Army helped brighten her Christmas as a child in Muskegon.

"My father was in the military and I have seven brothers and sisters. Sometimes it was hard to make ends meet," she recalled. "I remember one time when The Salvation Army came in with a gift for each of us and a food basket. It was really appreciated. It was a hard year for all of us."

She no longer remembers what the gift was, but she hasn't forgotten the feeling of being helped, and cared for during that tough and difficult year.

So for the past dozen or so years she has taken a turn or two each Christmas season ringing the bells for what is The Salvation Army's most important fund-raising effort of the year.

"I just like to do it because I figure the little bit I do will help families here and help kids get gifts at Christmas," Negele said. "I like talking to people. Most say hi, some say they can't help, and I say that's fine."

She encourages others in the community to help, too.

"I figure that if they can even do it for an hour and get a few bucks in the kettle, that's great. An hour is not that hard," she said.

Major Jon Welch of The Salvation Army Ludington Corps agrees that every bit helps The Salvation Army continue the services it has been providing in the Ludington area for 110 years.

"It helps to be able to receive money to help people in the community," he said. "And I think it makes you (volunteer bell ringers) feel good, too, because it's going to help people at Christmas and throughout the year."

"We still need a lot of ringers. It's tough to get people during weekday during the day."

Weekends, he continued, are important too because weekends are the peak giving times for the kettles.

The Ludington Corps has set a goal of \$60,000 this Christmas season through the Red Kettle campaign. It's a figure rounded up from the \$59,000-plus received in 2004.

"It would be nice to go over," said Welch noting the difficult financial situation The Salvation Army Ludington Corps finds itself in this year. The Salvation Army District Headquarters has given the Ludington Corps a four-month deadline to improve its finances or face possible closure. (See related story.)

The Salvation Army will have kettles at Shop-N-Save and Wal-Mart in Ludington and Nichols Drug Store in Scottville.

Also this year, some area stores will be encouraging shoppers to donate a dollar to the campaign for a name on paper Red Kettles which will be displayed.

"We rely on Christmas as our main fund raiser to help pay for the Mason and Oceana county Christmas programs and to assist people in the community throughout the year," Welch said. "This year is a crucial year for us at this location."

Negele will ring again for the campaign for another reason, too.

"I'm just very fortunate that I don't have to worry about Christmas or paying my bills," she explains. "It's easy (to ring). That's why I do it."

A bit of history ...

The Red Kettle campaign, first started in San Francisco in 1891, has traditionally been The Salvation Army's most prominent fund-raiser. The campaign continues through Christmas Eve. Nationally, the campaign raises almost \$100 million a year. Locally the goal is \$60,000 for programs in Mason and Oceana counties. Nationally, about 37 million people are served by The Salvation Army for food and toys at Christmas, utility and homeless assistance, senior and child care, and other social services.

Source: The Salvation Army

# United Way reaches 74 percent of goal

Gladwin County Record

November 21, 2005

GLADWIN – United Way of Gladwin County has reached 74 percent of its 2005-06 campaign goal of \$125,000.

The money raised during the annual fundraising campaign supports the United Way's 23 member agencies, helping provide services to county residents. Member agencies include the American Red Cross, Beaverton Lions Club Christmas Basket Program, Beaverton Recreation Program, Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention (CAN) Council, Council on Aging, Literacy Council of Clare and Gladwin Counties, Crime Stoppers of Gladwin County, Girl Scouts of Mitten Bay, Gladwin Summer Recreation Program, Gladwin County Industries, Hospice of Gladwin Area, Human Aid, Inc., Lake Huron Area Boy Scouts, Mid Michigan Big Brothers Big Sisters, Mid Michigan Community Action Agency, MidMichigan Visiting Nurse Association, Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) Program of Beaverton, Reading is Fundamental (RIF) Program of Gladwin, Sacred Heart Mission, Salvation Army, Shelterhouse (Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault), Student Assistance Program of Beaverton, and the Student Assistance Program of Gladwin.

The United Way Community Services Building in downtown Gladwin houses United Way and five other non-profit agencies. Habitat for Humanity, American Red Cross, Mid Michigan Big Brothers Big Sisters, Literacy Council and Shelterhouse all maintain offices there, providing a central location for residents seeking services.

To donate to the campaign, send contributions to United Way of Gladwin County, P.O. Box 620, Gladwin, MI 48624 or call 989-426-9225. Although fundraising efforts are concentrated in the fall, donations are accepted year round.

# **Caring tree helps those in need**

Gladwin County Record

November 21, 2005

BEAVERTON – The “Caring Tree” is up at Beaverton City Hall.

This is the third year the city has held the program, which gives residents an opportunity to help needy families. The tree will be decorated by Nila Frei’s third grade class at Beaverton Rural Schools with homemade decorations.

Tags on the tree specify the name, age, and gift requests. All donated gifts must be dropped off at Beaverton City Hall by Dec. 12.

For more information, contact Beaverton City Hall at 989-435-9343.

*Tuesday, November 29, 2005*  
*Detroit News*

## **Kilpatrick family charity is disabled**

**Group led by mayor's sister loses Mich. license to solicit funds; state wants more details on its operation.**

The state Attorney General's Office has declined to renew The Next Vision Foundation's license to solicit donations because the charity, started by Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick's family, has not provided enough information on how it operates.

Foundation president and founder Ayanna Kilpatrick and the group's attorney, James McGinnis, said the charity is preparing a state-requested audit and the license should be restored shortly. The inability to solicit donations comes at a bad time for the foundation, whose mission is to teach leadership to high school students and award scholarships.

Ayanna Kilpatrick, the mayor's sister, said this year the group helped about 1,000 young people in Detroit through scholarships, training, literacy education and the donation of laptop computers.

In the coming year, she said, the goal is to help 1,500 young people.

McGinnis said the sluggish Michigan economy, along with the Gulf Coast hurricanes, have affected giving to all charities and foundations, and The Next Vision Foundation was not spared. Donations to the group dropped last year, according to the financial disclosure form the group filed with the IRS in September.

In 2002 and 2003, the first two years the charity operated, it received about \$358,000 a year in donations; in 2004, according to the IRS 990 forms, it received \$117,000 in contributions and \$175,898 from special events, including the group's annual fundraising dinner and ball.

The charity, which previously had on its payroll the mayor's wife, Carlita Kilpatrick, and Lisa Cylar Miller, the wife of the city's chief administrative officer Derrick Miller, has just one employee now: Ayanna Kilpatrick.

She was paid \$99,376 as the group's president in 2004, a salary cut of \$1,500.

McGinnis said the staffing changes were implemented as the foundation looked at better ways to use its resources and added that some personnel needed at the foundation's inception were no longer needed.

Meanwhile the charity also ended 2004 with a \$22,656 deficit.

For 2002 and 2003, \$395,000 of the \$717,000 raised by the group went to the salaries of those three women.

The mayor's father, Bernard Kilpatrick, and the mayor's campaign strategist, Art Blackwell, are also on the board of directors, and the mayor and his mother, U.S. Rep. Carolyn Cheeks-Kilpatrick, D-Detroit, are identified as members of the charity's national advisory committee.

Ayanna Kilpatrick submitted a license renewal application with the Attorney General's Office on Sept. 19, 2005.

But according to records from the attorney general's charitable trust section, on Oct. 20, 2005, state auditor Joseph J. Kylman wrote Ayanna Kilpatrick asking the foundation to provide audited financial statements for 2004. Before approving the application, Kylman also wanted Kilpatrick to explain a 2005 lawsuit filed against the charity that alleges the group was spending more money on perks for friends and family than on program services.

That lawsuit, according to court records, was dismissed last summer by the judge assigned to the case in favor of the defendants.

Ayanna Kilpatrick, who also had been paid by her brother to help on his mayoral campaign, had until Nov. 20 to supply the information, but never did, records show.



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
LANSING



MARIANNE UDOW  
DIRECTOR

## News Release

Contact: Stepheni Schlinker or Maureen Sorbet (517) 373-7394

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### **Michigan Department of Human Services Summarily Suspends the Group Day Care Home License of Khristopher and Amanda Cross**

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**November 29, 2005**

The Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS), Office of Children and Adult Licensing issued an order of summary suspension and notice of intent to revoke the license of Kent County group day care home provider Khristopher and Amanda Cross, 2642 Fuller Avenue NE, Grand Rapids, Michigan. This action resulted from a recent investigation of a complaint of the child day care group home.

The October 14, 2005, complaint investigation found violations of the Child Care Organizations Act and/or day care family home promulgated rules requiring "emergency action" under the Michigan Administrative Procedures Act, MCL 24.292(2).

Effective 6:00 p.m., November 28, 2005, the Summary Suspension Order prohibits Khristopher and Amanda Cross from operating a group day care home at 2642 Fuller Avenue NE, Grand Rapids, Michigan or at any other address or location. Accordingly, they may not accept children for care after that date and time. The order also requires Mr. and Mrs. Cross to inform all of the parents of children in their care that their license has been suspended and that they can no longer provide day care.

Mr. and Mrs. Cross have held a license to operate a group day care home since November 6, 2001. The license was for twelve children.

Michigan law defines a group day care home as a private home in which more than six but not more than 12 minor children are given care and supervision for periods of less than 24 hours a day, unattended by a parent or legal guardian, except children related to an adult member of the family by blood, marriage, or adoption. Group day care home includes a home that gives care to an unrelated minor child for more than four weeks during a calendar year.

For more information, consult DHS Web site at [www.michigan.gov/dhs](http://www.michigan.gov/dhs).